Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0385AL-1 for Huntsville City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lays out a well-structured vision and reform plan that is, in nature, both achievable and quite ambitious.

Through a detailed and very well constructed needs assessment, and supportive approach to goals obtained through the evaluation (including coaching structure of teachers under Grant coordinator, consulting by outside vendor, and extensive training with data transparency on websites and through stakeholders) Huntsville had shown a devotion to increasing student achievement and ensuring supportive practices and strategies are in place for widespread and sustainable learning community success.

The applicant is both comprehensive and coherent in terms of approaching reform through a vision which maintains the four assurance areas as neccessary (those being approach, deepening student learning, increasing equity through support and individualization).

In particular, the applicants vision is uniquely strong and addresses the concept of personalized learning environments (as defined in the notice) with responses to the subcriteria that match and support the overall goals that this vision outlines.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant employs an outside evaluation system which identifies 3 key areas for improvement while addressing subcategories such as extended collaboration time for teachers and a structured extended day program which support internal and external stakeholders' understanding, buy-in and presence within the transparent process of systemic improvement within the LEA will abide.

The process by which implementation will occur is seemingly strong, and alignment to college and career-ready standards is evident under the Instruction category.

An assessment and LEA reform model appear logistically time-bound. Emphasis placed on technology and culture contribute to both the scope and viability of a long term implementation process for the applicant's vision.

As most aspects and elements of the selection criteria are present as well as an additional indication of schools and schools with participating students (by table and narrative) and throughout the high-quality plan, high points are being awarded.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant outlines a Director/Specialist coaching structure that appears legitimate and able to sustain long-term efforts and the paradigm shift needed for change. However, the applicant indicates that the Superintendent will be responsible for searching for Title I and Title II monies to maintain grant implementation and the logistics of this appear limited in scope and capacity based on traditional roles of a Superintendent and his/her given ability to seek out and obtain additional funding to support the grant.

While all personnel should be involved in pursuit of a long term sustainable reform, assignments that the Superintendent acquire additional funding indicates a lack of hierarchical support. Within the implementation of the grant itself an entity must exist for funding and without proper avenues for this funding source (and continued sources in future), the sustainability of the grant becomes compromised. While the applicants change model could be quite effective, it will need support, continued funding and adequate attention in order to continue to exist.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Summative assessment data reveals growth and indicators of success aligned toward future growth/improvement.

Data charts that reveal narrowed achievment gap numbers over the term of the grant support its purpose, however, the applicant does not indicate where those numbers are derived from and how will that be achieved. Charts are easily comprehensible and support the overall mission and purpose behind the application for funding and are aligned effectively.

Decreasing achievement gaps by raw data are not consistent but indicate improvement among sporadic groups with increases in time.

The data for Postsecondary degree attainment is not present and an 11-12 baseline could not be located; while the postsecondary degree attainment baseline data is empty, indicating this measure has yet to be attained. However, baseline data is necessary to all progress as such progress only comes in the form of a starting place and whether a positive or negative reflection of achievement, data is needed.

The Logic Model for Hunstville City Schools indicates emphasis on a multi-tiered model including the necessary integration of student achievement and student needs that are centered around the function and progress of Professional Learning Communities; in this way, Hunstville is exceptional.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant strongly meets all criteria in the category although several generalized conditions were noted as the applicant aims to have 80% of student body on 40th percentile in Reading and Math, indicating a noted track record of improvement despite applicant aims for the 40th percentile, which, by any standard, is a low level goal at either a site-based or district-wide (LEA) level.

The applicant indicates that data is available to all stakeholders through site data review meetings. Clarification surrounding data from such review meetings would help substantiate the claim that funding will be transparently outsourced and will address the lingering questions regarding use and allocation. This data is not accessible online, in packets, sent home with students and at various meetings or if, in fact this occur(ed/s), documentation supporting this explanation was not shared in the application.

HCS Star Enterprise Reading and Math Tables are quite vague and reiterate what was narratively explained and should either numerically or narratively disaggregate student performance data to support/inform stakeholders both overall and specifically.

Finally, the applicant indicates that the third step taken concentrates on using action research throughout the grant to determine specific instructional and student needs to center reform on what is happening at the classroom level, but logistical, strategic and conditions remain unseen in this area.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that budgets are posted online monthly to aid in transparency but does not indicate anything further with regard to personnel salaries as instructional staff, teachers only or non-personnel expenditures at the school level.

Specific accounting software, while helpful for accuracy, tracking, and data collection does not aid in public/stakeholder transparency of budgetary choices and figures.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant notes that the grant will allow the City of Huntsville - and by extension - the students of Huntsville - to have a digital (opportunity) gap closed by 2016 to ensure that individualized learning environments are created. With technical support provided locally and legislation to aid this initiative in place, the applicant is well on their way to success in this area.

The applicant demonstrates evidence that conditions have been sufficiently met and autonomy necessary for grant implementation in place and functioning through discussions and paperwork as signed and understood by the Alabama Superintendent and by Huntsville's own Superintendent. Based on the premise that quality communications guard and serve the district and funding sources in all cases, transparency among groups and within the legal, statutory and regulatory requirements is observed evidenced by WI-fi stations, engagement of various groups and technical support in place. In addition, the structure of advisory groups ensures the function and purpose of the proposed conditions.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicated six groups of stakeholders engaged and vetted "in accordance with all aspects of this proposal" - but does not indicate how or by what means this "accordance" was obtained. Further, it does not clarify the roles each played in the writing or agreement of the proposal and/or their engagement within this context of participation.

Additionally, the applicant goes on the indicate how the proposal will be implemented and shares 13 letters of support within the appendices. The letters of support indicate unanimous support and approval of the funding and grant application although none address concerns and all indicate a similar response that may appear as though it is, oftentimes, a form reply and not one of substantive depth or analysis.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has done a thorough job of including relevant and data-driven examples of previous reform attempts and successes as well as needs and gaps although beyond the scope of one year would be helpful and contribute evidence to this application. In this case, the applicant does not include information beyond the scope of one year and this exclusion is limiting based on the selection criteria for a high quality plan and the evidence necessary for addressed needs and gaps.

The applicant includes a high-quality plan basing evidence and needed documentation on the proposal for funding, but primarily on an alignment to the vision and the ultimate emphasis on personalized learning environments.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

A high-quality plan for the strategic improvement of learning and teaching is evidenced by the professional development model, the logic model, the incorporation of teacher-coaching and the consultation of Dr. Dufour as well as a pyramid of steps that create the professional development necessary and critical for such lasting sustainable reform as is noted in all sections of the application's college and career prep segment.

Conceptual frameworks provided indicate a high level of detail and clarify steps and strategies within the aspect of learning and instruction. Instructional targets, content planning, assessment of all learning and school-level monitoring appear to be on track with set guidelines and parameters.

The applicant suggests that a "District Level Monitoring of Targets" will occur quarterly to measure the success of "all areas" of the grant by the Superintendent, Dep. Superintendent and Department Heads. While it goes on to indicate that a "growth or lack of growth" will determine future investments based on viability, it makes no mention of a concrete plan, strategy or specific outline of benchmarks for recognizing growth or a lack theirof. Additional description regarding how all elements of the process work in tandem and align goals to support, monitor and improve instruction of educators - and also leaders -

would compliment this section but was not provided.

In terms of collegiate preparation and college readiness, Hunstville outlines a trajectory for improvement including a "GPS," leveled support system and various proposed outcomes that support the work of instruction, teacher coaching and modeling and learning at high levels.

Ultimately, this high-quality plan reaches teachers at pivotal stages and throughout the district thoroughly extending the function of professional development. This plan, when implemented, can render both short term and sustainable lasting reform in instruction and core teaching abilities as aligned to the high quality plan and vision statements in place.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	13

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes many relevant and appropriate examples to support the assessment that Hunstville is vested in terms of increasing achievement in part due to instructional improvements, dedication to relevant issues (i.e. Common Core State Standards) and as evidenced by emphasis placed on sustainable, continuing leadership at site-based levels and at an LEA level.

The vision and high-quality plan are both supported and well-defined in the implementation steps of this process as well as in the short and longterm goals and reforms the applicant lays out.

Measurement and data tracking of student progress, tools to reach all teachers and support their individual and collective efforts, leadership support, effective training and systems set for the monitoring of continual progress within a range of professional development opportunities, coaching and assessment and the deployment and support given to instructional personnel and leadership teams support the overall plan and ensure the vision's implementation.

Effective use of college and career readiness standards contribute to the overall vision of both the high-quality plan in each stage as well as the preparation.   The applicant does not include specifics and details for services and/or mention of leadership teachers, evaluation systems or how "highly effective" will be determined.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

According to the applicant, the 1:1 framework consists of 4 learning components critical to the vision and to college and career readiness.

Through each core area, various strategies are in place to support implementation. While the 1:1 personalized learning environment could be improved with digital technology and learning software, to the extent that achievement becomes valid and proven and by what model this achievement is assured when this occurs district-wide is left to be addressed and is currently not included in the application.

Skillfully incorporating staff and professional development training within this implementation is evident. As such, leadership teams are provided autonomy and self-direction in cases where subjective cultural and community-based decisions reveal their necessity. While these elements are beneficial, outside of a technological development, 1:1 teacher training and support remains to be seen. Teacher Compass and School Net will support these initiatives.

Instructionally, mastery determined as a result of comparative credits and opprotunities as opposed to time is evidence of progress and strengths-based instruction that is truly personalized and individual.

Collective strategies for instructional improvement, electronic learning shifts and programs such as the I-Now data system and ZEOS catalyze the vision and high-quality plan to ensure that logistics and administration of the particulars are effectively coordinated.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has taken various steps to ensure that successful implementation of a 1:1 digital conversion takes place in spite of economic, location or variable hardships that stand as barrier to progress.

Appendix G outlines needed infrastructure, hardware and technological adjustments that are critical for full implementation to take effect.

Within particular LEA policy, of note are adjustments made instructionally and at a leadership site and central office based level to improve access and equity of technology, that technical support exists and encourages all stakeholders, students, parents and especially teachers and that systems in place (ZEOS, I-Now, GradPoint, Odysseyware, Teacher Compass, and Dash) have strategic support and internal systems in place for their sustainability, capacity and appropriate function to support the vision and high-quality plan in place.

Of chief importance, the LEA has logistical and calculated procedures in place to justify the implementation of vision and the development of long-term, sustainable reform.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant sets in place plans to revisit and review practices and instructional strategies and PD associated with a 1:1 conversion as well as site- based leadership teams and instructional coaching strategies that support teachers and all staff in their work with K-12 students. Annual outside evaluations are set to take place within the district at a site-based level. Continuous improvement processes are in place as listed.

While the information is compelling and could conclusively show progress and success toward goals, some statements are general and open to interpretation, leaving an expanse of option available when it comes to implementation and follow-through. For example, "Professional learning services that will be determined by the results of the progress reports can include some of the following..." followed by a list of broad issues

-Analysis of Effective Teaching Through Action Research
-Formative Assessments and Standards-Based Grading

-Walkthroughs and Instructional Rounds

-Classroom Management That Works

-Designing and Teaching Learning Goals and Objectives

-Teaching Academic Vocabulary

-The Highly Engaged Classroom

-Teaching with Interactive White Boards

-School Leadership

While these issues are critical to changing paradigms in education today and will continue to be in the very near future, the generalized statements above are not as strategic as will be necessary for long-term sustainable results in these areas.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has strategies for long-term and ongoing communication to be in place with both internal and external stakeholders. This is evidenced through the teacher coaching and leadership improvement model in place that will be the effect of an implemented high-quality plan and vision but also through the adjustments and outside evaluation of various entities including the consultation of Dufour and annual reviews of improvement and planning steps.

Imbedded within the applicant's vision, high-quality plan for continuous and sustainable reform and within the varied levels of professional development (in terms of leadership and that which trickles down to a site-based level of support and engagement) are the implementation steps needed.

The communication and engagement of stakeholders internally and externally will be advanced for such a large-scale initiative and district.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Tha applicant has appendices and performance measures that indicate necessary baseline data (although not complete in every case) followed by disaggregated subgroup data indicating performance levels of students at myriad sites within the LEA.

College readiness baseline data ('11-'12) indicates a lack of information to support that element of reform but throughout the application in other elements, plentiful data and performance measures are shared.

The applicant meets all criteria in place for seeking quite ambitious and yet achievable reform that can be sustained well beyond the life of the grant due to processes and procedures in place to shift the paradigm of teacher education, professional development and leadership LEA-wide.

By outlining reforms, movement of employees, particular LEA protocols and policies, focused collaboration, comprehensive budgeting and allocations of funding to various elements within the process, the applicant reviews, measures and improves instruction and policy as implemented through the high-quailty plan and vision and thoroughly meets the selection criteria in this category.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Sustainability of grant efforts are recognized and strategic in E4.

If given the opportunity to advance towards this plan, most of steps and procedures included are research-based high-yield strategies and can be tracked and assessed. While implementation issues may arise within continuous improvement, they may also be the sole focus/aim of the reform and chart future progress.

The structure of this plan is high-quality and such strategic steps are evidence of progress and - at the very least - improvement towards the measures currently in place towards 1:1 technology integration and teacher development.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a budget sheet that is factual and cost-based, developed according the specifications necessary and disaggregated as necessary to defend both implementation and the purposes of the grant.

Points were awarded to applicant for increasing detail, clarity of budgetary aims and discretion within cost sheets that identified and supported reasonable efforts to implement a proposal, a description of funding both internally and externally needed and acquired as well as isolated funding charts and information presented with a narrative that focuses on the longterm sustainability after the life of the grant that directly catalyzes the personalized learning environments critical of such a reform.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a very high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant based on a high number of strategic data sheets and inclusive information that supports both the interest and realities of the cost and logistical needs of maintainence of such an initiative.

Long term, however (potentially in ten years) the grant runs a risk of compromise and risk as continued finding will yield future progress and will be necessitated for the high yield funding to support curricula and a continuance of reform.

State and local government leaders and financial support is apparent and present at this time and in the coming 3 years after the term of the grant, with detailed budgets provided.

Full points in this area cannot be granted at this time because long term the sustainability of this initiative without trusted financial funding (privatization or trusted funding) may be critical for it's longterm continuance and success.

In terms of the life of the grant, funding now will catalyze a shift but will ultimately necessitate large-scale funding to perpetuate long-term in order for the data and information systems, the support and direction and the vision of the model to reach full implementation.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant addresses a level of economic need placing a large impediment on the goal of creating Personalized Learning Environments for all students. In spite of this impediment, Huntsville will provide computers, netbooks, or access to I-pads. All classroom teachers were provided with laptops, in addition. Extensive staff development took place prior to the beginning of classes, and is continuing throughout the year.

Through online textboosk, contracts with outside vendors, acquisition of state-determined courses of study and college-career ready skills and a focus on individualized curriculum, goals for accelerating student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates with highly qualified college and career ready graduates, and increasing the effectiveness of educators as well as the highly ambitious goal of a 22 composite score on the ACT LEA-wide with educators taking part in an achievement based instructional evaluation system beginning by 2014-15... it's clear the application sets up sustainable long-term partnerships, includes schools to create decision-making processes and the engagement of parents/families, and routinely assesses challenges and problems that may interfere.

Ultimately, the applicant sets quite ambitious yet truly achievable goals as a result of the systems, policies and procedures in place to safeguard the implementation and direction of their vision in alignment the the high-quality of their plan although coherent partnerships would further support said plan and progress.

Finally, a public versus private agency role/description appears to be absent as does a description of how the partnerships would work together.   The development and description of the elements of the partnership appear to be weak.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Ultimately the applicant sets up a quite achievable and yet highly ambitious plan for engaging a large LEA in a paradigm shift towards cutting-edge 21st century education driven by technology and the empowerment and development of skilled instructors and leaderhsip teams to carry out the mission, vision and high-quality plan aimed as educational redesign and reform.

The applicant meets the criteria coherently and comprehensively by building on the core educational assurance areas and is especially outstanding within the area of personalized learning environments with the aim of instructing students individually with a 1:1 technologically immersed curricula designed with students mastery - not time contibution - in mind.

Through the strategic plan laid out in categories A-E, Absolute Priority 1 is met as the LEA will venerate and sustain those educators, administrators and advocates who deepen student learning and understanding, who reform education at a systemic and site-based level, who decrease achievement gaps, expand technological equity and access and prepare students to be competitive in college and their future careers.

Total	210	162

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0385AL-2 for Huntsville City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Huntisville City Schools' vision to capture learning by establishing core standards and creating an environment to push both teachers and students to their highest potential is detailed by the school performance targets set in place. Evidence to support the implementation of the plan is present in form of staff development, providing equal access across LEA , equipment and on site support to help stakeholders. The LEA has a new challenge as they have implemented full digital conversion in August of 2012. LEA has evidence of providing steps to justify this full implementation by establishing full connection to student learning and achievement but also providing on going support to teachers across LEA. Schools have targeted goals to create personalized learning environment and LEA's plan establishes the guidelines to help develop and monitor the targeted goals. Those targeted goals are: planning content, developing assessment, delivering instruction and community building. Evidence to support the teachers in this process is present through provided staff development at the beginning of the school year. Applicant states that all schools will develop academic and cultural goals, but there is no timetable as to when and how the goals will be developed and implemented. Evidence also includes ongoing support from outside vendors to equipment and software support 24/7. The guidelines indicates a commitment in seeing successful implementation of the plan with focus on higher student achievement and addressing students with learning disability. This section qualifies for a high score based on the evidence that articulate and support the goals for student achievement.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools provides a list of the participating schools, with 51.7% of students identified with economic needs and total number of students participating in the plan. The process to select the schools was tied with the data that supports student learning and achievement in Math and ELA and Pre AP and AP program participation as well as student attendance and suspension records. The collective data, addressing different aspects of student achievement, and identification of the weaknesses is a strong evidence of a solid plan that includes multiple data.

Providing equal opportunity to students and staff, regardless of economic status of students in schools, is a strong evidence of the vision to enhance student learning for all students. Evidence is supported by issuing laptop, netbooks or ipad to all students and laptops for all teachers across the LEA. The plan to help students in the identified schools achieve the highest potential is based on City of Huntsville history. The city has been home to research and technology advancement with focus on science, math and arts. With a belief that every student in the LEA can achieve the high expectations and become productive citizens of Huntsville, the detailed plan provides optimum learning opportunity to all students. The selection process does not address any English Learner student population or students with learning disability though. This section of the application qualified for a high score.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant believes that high impact learning is not about creating efficiency and ease for teachers and leaders, but rather about challenge of making changes that have deep meaning and lifelong impact for students is strongly supported by the steps detailed in this section. Strong evidence of high quality plan describes the coaching process from the beginning of the implementation and throughout the life of the grant, as well as how the plan will be extended to support the reform district wide. Because of the implementation steps, coaching will result in better teaching and learning for teachers. Student learning will be optimized as everyone across the LEA will be supporting one another in the process. Teachers who may need more help will be assisted by modeling, observation, feed back and support. Teachers who are effective teachers based on the student achievement data, will also have a chance for growth and learn. This is a meaningful modeling and learning process as it is relevant to each site's special needs and builds on what is already being done at the site. Since everyone across the district will have access to coaching and learning, high quality reform will be uniformly implemented across the district. Applicant's commitment to the plan is supported by use of Title I and Title II funds as needed to expand beyond the life of the grant. Because of the systematic approach and steps in implementation and expansion plan, this section receives a high score.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools has enclosed the assessment data. Assessment data and projections for growth indicates a strong commitment to proficiency growth in reading and math. Decreasing achievement gap in reading and math is also an area of focus, as well as increasing graduation rate and college enrollment. The data to support closing the achievement gap, is prepared by grade level 3rd - 11th. This plan is achievable as all schools are engaged in coaching and refining instruction through traditional and digital curriculum. An expected annual growth of 5-7 percent is achievable, based on teachers continuously engaging in staff development, and growing as a professional learning community. The logic model of effective teaching and learning, provides the guide to continuous assessment, analyzing student learning results, modifying instruction and resources and working to provide the best instruction possible. Applicant details the steps based on the data provided to increase teacher and instructional effectiveness. As part of the staff development, coaching is the only plan. There are no alternative or additional plans to support staff development. Summative data analysis's is an over all and not specific to school or grade level. Based on the evidence provided, the section receives a medium score.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	6

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools uses 3-3-3 achievement/gap/growth criteria to measure student performance. Applicant includes benchmark results and increased student achievement in reading and math for one year. Based on the benchmark results students show great progress in reading and math at or above grade level. This growth can be the result of LEA embracing professional learning community culture, as leaders and administrators worked together to explore alternative and effective staff development. The LEA appears to be on the right direction, building the collaborative teams across the schools. Goals related to the needs of schools have been defined, as the LEA has also defined the actions to be taken to support the schools in meeting the goals. Staff development in professional learning community context for administrators with focus on sustaining successful intervention has taken place in 2011. Based on the professional learning model, staff development is offered to help with focus on collaboration and assessment. Applicant also lists actions to be implemented to help sustain the improvement reforms. Tables are provided to show growth and closing the achievement gap. Students have access to data electronically to monitor results. Even though the enclosed data supports the growth of student learning and achievement and there is a plan to close the achievement gap, there is lack of data from previous years to show how students have improved prior to the fall of 2011. Based on showing one year progress and based on lack of three additional year data, this section receives a low score in the medium range.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools details the responsibilities of the Finance Department and states reports of debt service and capital projects, are posted on line. General information is provided about the department and its operation. Applicant fails to provide

any information about the personnel salaries, personnel salaries at school level, personnel salaries for teachers an information on non personnel expenditures by school site. Due to lack of following the criteria in this section, applicant receives a low score.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools began implementation of digital textbook when permission was granted to Alabama public school and college authority to sell and issue up to $100 million in bonds to help local schools. Applicant states financial support of the City of Huntsville to pay for the WIFI stations around the city providing internet access to students who do not have access to internet. Applicant appears to have sufficient autonomy under State law to implement the personalized learning environment. This section receives the high score.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools engaged Huntsville Education Association, school leadership, Huntsville City Schools PTA in supporting the proposal. In response to mandatory extended learning day, Huntsville City Schools appears to still be working with the Education Association. Even though there is good reason for extending the school, there is not solid evidence to support that Education Association is in agreement. There are two schools that currently have extended learning, and that is because they are required to have it under school improvement grant. Even though the applicant states that expanded learning is included in the budget, there is no solid evidence to support that it will be implemented, due to possible lack of support by the Education Association. Applicant states that majority of teachers in a meeting showed interest in the concept, but does not state numbers or data to support that statement. There is no evidence that a follow up meeting will be facilitated to determine the final outcome for Education Association.

Applicant states that in order to get more community involvement through Alabama Student Assistance Program, they gave funds to a non profit community partners to encourage them to participate in the 1:1 digital curriculum.   This section receives a score at the bottom of medium range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools will be implementing staff development to help teachers and staff accessing and using the digital curriculum. A large percentage of teachers, 45% have rarely or have never accessed websites or portals for resources. Even though there is 48 - 61% of the teachers who feel comfortable using technology, there is a large group that still needs to become comfortable in using technology to use on daily basis and teach students. An outside vendor will provide one on one training embedded in the classroom, and Tuesdays will be used to allow teachers receive additional professional development. Applicant details the staff needs and staff development but fails to mention how student learning will be addressed as the staff becomes effecient with technology and use of digital curriculum. In addition there is no analysis of needs and gaps for students. There is a survey detailing the needs and gaps for teacher training. This section receives a low score.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools outlines a continuous learning plan that includes steps that the district will take to support school leadership. Leadership will create a framework to bridge district and school initiatives, creating instructional targets based on completing needs assessment, community building with focus on what is best for students, content planning based on college and career ready standards, assessment for learning to analyze data, school and district level monitoring of targets, and supporting intervention for teachers based on staff development.

There is evidence of plan to support personalized learning. Students 6th grade and up will have opportunity

to work and learn GPS (Goals + Planning=Success) - career coaches. Students' progress in 2nd -5th grades will be monitored and through SMART goals, action plans created. College and career ready standards and directions are defined for 6th grade students and up. Based on the standards they will be engaged in deep learning experiences. Through peer coaching and shared teaching, staff development will be provided to guide instruction and learning. Students are able to be involved in deeper learning experiences, and have exposure to diverse contexts due to having access to technology, as they will stay engaged on tasks longer. The challenge will be that 45% of teachers are not comfortable with use of technology. There is evidence to support teamwork, goal setting or how students will master critical academic content, based on the outcomes. Applicant will provide access to Career Coaches for 7-12 grade classrooms, so that students will develop the relationships necessary for career planning success. This will be evident through partnership with Alabama community colleges and there are benchmark indicators in place to measure the outcomes of this proposal.

Intervention is addressed in general, but not specifically for high- needs students. There are no specific targeted plans to support each site in addressing the needs. This section receives a low score in high range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant's plan supports personalized learning environment with the use of digital curriculum. Student and teachers have access to online Common Core curriculum. To ensure optimum use of the curriculum staff development and outside vendor supporting technology needs, will be provided throughout the year. The goal will be to build the capacity in district staff to provide appropriate coaching and staff development. Students have access to the material when they are not in school, hence the learning will continue. Applicant details staff development and coaching with a three year plan to optomize teaching environment. Frontloading at the beginning of the year to help teachers get started and continue from then on. Addressing staff development and long term plan, will help teachers utilize the digital resources more effectively. Student learning will benefit because teachers are better prepared to help them navigate the resources. Also adopting the content and providing on line learning will motivate and engage students better in learning. The longer students stay on the task and use different modalities to access curriculum, the closer they get to the mastery of content. Use of portfolios will set in place progress mastery and a way to monitor the progress. The online learning will provide extended learning opportunities. Applicant does not include the steps to measure student progress toward meeting college and career ready standards. The applicant does not include direction on district's teacher evaluation system to help school leaders and teams to assess and take steps to improve effectiveness of teachers.

The combination of data systems from state and within district will provide results for analyzing and monitoring student progress.There is also no evidence to support effectiveness of the teacher evaluation system or if there are any subsequent steps towards evaluations process for teachers and school leaders. The personalized learning environment to support students with special needs is not addressed. This section receives a score at the bottom of high range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant lists many ways that the LEA will be supporting the schools to implement the plan. These include autonomy to leadership teams to make decisions supporting instructional improvement decisions, staff development, collaborative teams, and teacher observation. One on One Learning framework will be implemented across the entire district. Baseline data and survey on teacher readiness, to provide information on what will be needed to help implement the plan better has been submitted to Pearson. The information to help adjust and provide the staff development necessary to help with implementation of the personalized learning environment. Other tools in place are: Teacher Compass, formative assessment, and access to instructional tools. On going admin training will provide the much needed support to help with leadership decisions. Schools have the autonomy on setting calendars and schedules, support is provided as needed. The stake holders have access to information throughout the implementation process. LEA is addressing issues as they come up, to move forward. Students are given multiple opportunities for mastery of standards. This is supported by use of variety of assessments, from formative to book tests and teacher created assessment. Students with disabilities are also able to access all digital content. Applicant

states that the central office provides ample support for leadership development and supports the students' personalized learning , however, there is lack of evidence to support how the progress of student is monitored without a data base that will aggregate the assessment data and monitor students' achievement. This section receives a score in the bottom of high range.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant describes the personalized learning opportunity for each student through providing the digital learning. The curriculum supports student's college and career- ready path and addresses the rigor of Common Core standards. Each student has a laptop, notebook or ipad to use. Staff development is imbedded in the plan to help support staff as the plan is implemented. Students' baseline data helps develop each student's learning plan and digital curriculum helps with differentiated learning opportunities. Parent engagement is supported through informative sessions for parents and stake holders, equal access to wifi is provided with a partnership with the city to parents and students across the city. The extended day learning opportunity (if implemented) will provide ample time for mastering the standards, as well as getting ready for college exams. I-Now data system allows parents access to their child's academic grades on daily basis. Electronic learning systems are integral component of the digital curriculum and parents, students and teachers have access to electronic tools and tutors.

Through WIFI access around town, parents have access to their child's information. This will help monitor attendance as well as progress towards mastery. Consultants will provide technical support, and this will give equal support and use of technology to parents and students. Applicant does not detail the plan to engage and keep parents and students engaged throughout the implementation and learning process, until everyone is comfortable using the resources. This section receives a high score.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools details in this section the process of implementation of the proposal through Teach for America, recruiting highly qualified teachers, providing extensive staff development to help teachers and giving teachers incentive based on student achievement. Applicant proposes a cycle of technical assistance to monitor the implementation. Applicant lists the responsibilities and a timeline for the cycle of technical support.   School leadership team will function as a unit that supports reform efforts within school, discussing instructional needs and staff assistance on weekly basis. Applicant states data will be gathered from students classroom observation to determine the focus. Applicant states a 30 day action plan that provides information to assess through school walkthroughs, there is no evidence of rubric as to how the action plan will determine effectiveness of progress. Continuous improvement cycle - assessment and data analysis, action plan, instructional decisions will help students with the rigor of the academic standards. This section received a high score.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant outlines steps necessary to sustain achieving the grant goals, while providing transparency in reporting the progress to internal and external stakeholders.   Strategies for on going communication are listed as: weekly and monthly site meetings to determine necessary staff development, coaching as the student achievement is reviewed; preparing reports to be shared with LEA and outside expertise to better monitor the progress, reviewing and implementing suggesting modifications or interventions. Continuous monitoring will be shared with all stakeholders through school websites which will include instructional targets as well as evidence of effectiveness during the monthly review meetings. Applicant states strategies for ongoing communication. This section receives the high score.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant provides tables outlining percentage of participating students with highly effective, effective Teacher or Principal performance measure, with baseline data and goals for the life of the grant. Tables also are provided for Performance measure and goals in reading and math for grade levels as well as student on the right track for college and career ready. Data in tables provided details the criteria for this section. Based on the data provided this section receives a high score.

	Available	Score
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools proposes a cycle of technical assistance to monitor the implementation process. Based on the assessment data, plan of action will be prepared. Instructional decisions will be made based on the plan of action after evaluating student learning. There are walk throughs and meetings scheduled, 30 day action plan, it is not clear as to the criteria for the action plan and outcomes. Continuous improvement cycle - assessment and data analysis, action plan, instructional decisions will help students with the rigor of the academic standards.This section receives a high score.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant's budget focuses on purchasing the equipment, supporting technology and staff development through the life of the grant. During 2012 many parts of the purchase including the digital curriculum have been addressed. Some personnel jobs will be added, such as grant project director and coaches for college career readiness, as well as positions in the IT department as more technology support is needed to fully implement plan. While these positions are created, other support positions will be replaced.   Budget outlines grant funds to be used for classroom video creations, show and share video portal, wifi cards for students. Funds to be used are identified, city and community resources helping with WIFI funding are identified. Summary and narrative of budgets included. This section received a high score.

	Available	Score
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools have allocated part of their budget through 2017 to help sustain this plan. This will include local and state funds that are given to the schools. This section receives high score.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools addresses meeting the needs of the low economically disadvantaged students. Making sure these students receive the personalized learning environments just as any other student is the goal of the Huntsville City Schools. The overall goal is for 80% of students to become college and career ready. The Huntsville City Schools Innovation Instructional Leader proposal covers domains in community building within schools, commitment to raise graduation rate, consistent use of formative assessment, best practices to engage students in learning, and ultimately raising reading and math scores by 10%. Applicant addresses a step by step implementation of the plan for raising student achievement in math and reading, improving instruction, and helping all students become career and college ready. Creating a uniform approach to content planning and instructional strategies, assessment and teacher accessibility to data, as well as a common language in all schools to address student and employee absences will be implemented. All school practices will be based on Professional Learning Community.   This section receives a high score.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	**Met/Not Met**	**Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Huntsville City Schools identifies the 4 core assurances, with focus on student learning and advancement. The instructional programs and curriculum will be implemented based on digital curriculum. All schools have implemented the digital curriculum and are working to ensure teacher efficiency in using the on line resources. Applicant provides a detailed guideline on staff development and steps to implement coaching across the schools. School leadership will focus on building staff capacity at each site to create the culture of efficiency within. The central office will continue to support throughout the grant project manager input and outside vendor who will provide assistance for hardware and applications. The LEA's plan of action provides for data assessment using STAR tool three times a year. More analysis of gaps and needs is needed to support the assessment tool STAR being effective. There are observation tools in place, but there is no rubric or tool to assess effectiveness of the teachers and administrators. The continuous improvement plan does not provide a rubric or direction on how to monitor progress.

Applicant works with the community members to provide parent and student access to technology through WIFI. Working with the Education Association, extended day learning may be implemented. Overall plan provides details on instruction and meeting students need, steps to move forward in implementing the digital curriculum effectively while involving all stakeholders. Goals to increase student achievement, close the achievement gap and help high school students with career and college ready standards are in place. The plan does meet the requirements for absolute priority 1.

Total	**210**	**162**

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Optional budget supplement was not provided.

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0385AL-3 for Huntsville City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

HCS describes a vision that builds on most of the core educational assurance areas.

- Their curriculum is aligned with the Alabama Courses of Study, is compatible with the Common Core, and they plan to align the curriculum with the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards.
- There is a stated commitment to implementing data systems that will direct instructional decisions
- They plan on revising their teacher evaluation plan to include incentives for teachers based on student achievement and performance evaluation.

HCS' commitment and vision of digital learning supports the grant's goal of accelerating achievement, deepening learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support. Their approach appears to be clear and credible.

- The district is committed to embedding digital learning systemically: distribution of hardware to students and teachers, educational software to enhance and personalize learning, data management and decision-making, and ongoing tech support along the way.
- All students received a laptop, netbook, or access to iPads, giving all students equal access to digital learning.
- HCS is committed to giving all student free access to the curriculum anytime – day or night – by increasing the community's Wi-Fi capability.
- Curriculum alignment, data analysis, faculty professional development, and extended learning time are all designed to promote and accelerate student achievement.

Part of the vision lacks focus in the area of turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

- The vision appears to be uniformly applied to all school and students, which addresses the equity issue; however, the lowest-achieving schools need the most support and guidance. There is insufficient information on how those schools' needs will be addressed differently.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the extent to which HCS will implement its reform proposal appears very comprehensive and inclusive of students and teachers.

There are, however, some weaknesses in criterion (a), the description of the process used to select schools to participate.

(a) In addition to using a sound approach to identifying low-income students (Russell National School Lunch Act), HCS appropriately used a three-prong approach to determine eligibility: an analysis of academic achievement, an analysis of pre-AP and AP program, and an analysis of the climate and culture of the school. Unfortunately, the descriptions of the analyses and backup documentation are weak.

- They placed their academic achievement backup documentation for this section in Appendix B where the only grades listed were 6-8. In addition, there is no explanation of what the 3-3-3 means.
- They cite the AP scores in Appendix C, in which four of the seven high schools demonstrate improvement over time; however, they do not list the AP courses available to students and current enrollment in those courses.
- They mention teacher attendance in their application and provide an attendance spreadsheet in Appendix D; however, they do not provide an analysis of that data.
- Following teacher data, there are several pages listing Average Score Data but no explanation of what that data mean.
- Finally, there is no documentation on student suspension data and school perception data.

(b) Their list of participating schools, participating students, and participating educators appears comprehensive.

(c) Their application table of participating schools and demographics appears to support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

HCS describes a three-year, high-quality professional development plan to scale up and translate their reform to support

district-wide change to reach their outcome goals.

- District leaders (curriculum and staff development directors) will develop coaching structures based on the Joyce and Showers' model.
- Ongoing, comprehensive instructional coaching cycles will occur during the first two years of the grant.
- During the third year the district will implement a peer coaching model within grade levels and content areas

While plans for professional development are outlined, there are no other high-quality plans focusing on other aspects of their proposals, particularly the cornerstone of their reform proposal, the 1:1 Personalized Learning Environment that includes their expansive technology initiative of laptops or tablets for every student and community-wide access to free WiFi. Additional proposals missing in this section include extended learning time and assessment data collection and analysis.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) HCS presents several standardized summative assessments to measure improvement in student learning and performance for all students and ten subgroups. They also develop what appears to be achievable annual goals from one year to the next, culminating with 75 in the 2016-17 post-grant, school year.

(b) Their goals for closing the achievement gaps appear to be ambitious yet achievable. They want the gap to cease with the 2015-16 school year, and their annual rates decrease in attainable increments.

(c) The goal of 90% or greater for graduation rates for all students and all subgroups except two by 2016-17 is ambitious. Their current rates are quite low, ranging from 10% for special education to 49% for low-income to 52% for Black students. The goal may be achievable based on their plans to implement credit recovery programs.

(d) The goal of 75% or greater for college enrollment rates for all students and all high schools appears to be ambitious and achievable in light of the overall plans of HCS to fully integrate college and career readiness standards in its initiative.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(1) HCS demonstrates an increase in reading (15%) and math (23%) achievement as measured by their STAR Enterprise assessment system. However, the grant calls for a clear record of success in the past four years, and there is no mention of data for three years prior to the 2011-12 school year in this section of the application.

(a) They reference gap and performance data for grades 1-8 in Appendix B; however, the data found there show only grades 6-8. In addition there is no explanation for interpreting the 3-3-3 reports, and the data come only from Spring 2012. This does not reflect a record of success.

At the high school level, there appears to be a record of academic growth; however, the comparative data used to identify growth appear to come from Spring 2012 only. This does not reflect a record of success in the past four years. Neither graduation rates nor college enrollment rates are listed to demonstrate a record of success in these two areas.

(b) There is no clear record of success reported on ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools.

(c) They describe data reviews occurring in a Go To Meeting setting, in which all stakeholders could call in, listen and view the data reports. Also, parents have access to the Renaissance Learning website to monitor their child's results.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

HCS demonstrates a high level of transparency by posting on its website all financial reports, including expenditures for all fund types and account groups.

(a) - (d) HCS utilizes the NexGen software, employed by districts throughout the state of Alabama and found by state officials

as the optimal accounting program for governmental accounting.

| (B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points) | 10 | 10 |

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

HCS cites a May, 2012 law (Alabama Ahead) as its example of autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments. The law authorizes Alabama public schools to sell and issue up to $100 million in bonds to help districts purchase technology and digital tools, the cornerstone of HCS' proposal for personalized learning environments.

| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points) | 10 | 5 |

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

HCS describes key agencies and organizations with whom they conferred to develop their proposal (Alabama State Department of Education, City of Huntsville, Huntsville Education Association, PTA, and school and district leaders); however, there was insufficient information on how meaningful stakeholder engagement actually was.

(a) There is no evidence that students and families outside of the PTA were involved in the process. Similarly, HCS states school leaders were conferred upon, but there is no description on how that happened (e.g., number of meetings, topics, participants, etc.)

(i) HCS describes that they conferred with the Huntsville Education Association and how input from the Huntsville Education Association resulted in a modification of the extended time program (moving from mandatory extended time to voluntary). However, there is no further evidence of support for the proposals from teachers in the participating schools.

(b) The appendix includes photocopies of nine letters of support from the mayor, state department, and other local community agencies and stakeholders; however there are no letters of support from PTA or student organizations.

| (B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points) | 5 | 5 |

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

HCS describes a needs assessment they conducted on teachers' current knowledge and comfort level of integrating technology and instruction. From that survey they identified needs and gaps in teacher knowledge of technology and developed a high quality plan for implementing their personalized learning environment.

- They identified responsible parties for implementing activities (an outside vendor for professional training and their IT department).
- Their timeline included activities already planned for the 2012-13 school year.
- Their deliverables included workshops on various software programs and computer skills.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The cornerstone of HCS proposal is the digital learning experience that is designed to personalize the learning environment and provide students with support to graduate college and career-ready. In addition, their plan describes professional development in instructional strategies, curriculum alignment to college and career ready standards, and other strategies to boost achievement (extended learning time, additional support personnel, and access to a wide array of educational software).

However, they do not describe a high-quality plan in which they clearly outline specific timelines, deliverables and responsible parties. Instead, they describe general approaches to implementing a continuous school improvement process.

(a)(i) HCS plans to place resource people, such as career coaches, in grades 7-12 who will assist students in understanding that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. They will implement this by having coaches meet with students to examine their academic strengths and weaknesses and their career interests based on inventories from

the EXPLORE and PLAN tests.

(ii) The career coaches will help students identify learning and development goals through ACT's EPAS data reports, allowing students to structure their learning and measure their progress through the following assessments: EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT.

(iii)-(v) There is insufficient information as to how they will meet the criteria listed in these three areas. The focus of the career coaches is primarily in the exploration of careers at the middle school level and bridging secondary and post-secondary education at the high school level.

(b)(i) They say their focus is on effective instruction and achievement of all students; however, they do not articulate a way to ensure that a personalized sequence of content and skill development will enable students to achieve learning goals.

(ii) They state in this section there will be a clear vision as to how instruction should be addressed, but they do not describe the vision or present a strategy to implement that vision.

(iii) They mention that the curriculum and assessments will adhere to college and career-ready standards and all students will have the opportunity to learn the content; however, they do not describe a strategy to ensure this will happen.

(iv)(A)-(B) They describe a goal to analyze data regularly to monitor progress toward school and student achievement goals, and they plan to utilize career coaches to provide personalized learning recommendations based on the results of EPAS scores and interest inventories.

(v) There is insufficient information to determine accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to ensure they are on track toward meeting college and career-ready standards.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	3

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a)(i) HCS present a plan to engage participating educators in training to support their capacity to teach effectively using the technology and digital tools comprising their 1:1 Learning Initiative. However, they do not present a high-quality plan of professional development with information on the specific timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties for the training.

(ii) They do not describe in detail how teachers will be trained in adapting content and instruction, so students can engage in common and individual tasks in response to their needs. There is no mention of differentiation, collaborative work, project-based learning, videos or audio projects.

(iii) They mention enhancing teachers' collection and use of achievement data and conducting monthly data meetings to inform an guide instruction, but there is no other description of a high-quality plan to train teachers in data collection and analysis.

(iv) They do not make any references to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness by using feedback from their evaluation system.

(b)(i) They describe professional development activities centered around their digital learning proposal. They plan to hire an outside vendor to work with staff to refine the digital curriculum resource portfolio to guide each student's learning environment.

(ii) They mention teachers' utilization of free Internet resources and teacher-built lesson plans as examples of high-quality learning resources; however they do not describe specific appropriate resources for content and assessments.

(iii) They do not specifically describe processes and tools to match student needs with resources and approaches to provide feedback about the effectiveness of the resources. They mention consultants who will front load services so that teachers receive intensive levels of support at the beginning of the initiative, but they do not give details about those services.

(c)(i)-(ii) There is no mention of school leaders or leadership teams in the section, nor is there a discussion about the teachers' and principals' evaluation system. HCS does not meet the criteria selection in this section regarding leaders or leadership teams.

(d) They do not present a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

HCS' plan to support project implementation focuses more on infrastructure than policies. They have described their commitment to full implementation of their 1:1 Learning Initiative through the distribution of hardware, selection of software, and training of administrators, teachers and students. However, there is insufficient description of the policies that accompany this initiative.

(a) HCS has embarked on its implementation of the 1:1 Learning Initiative, but there is not enough information on how they organized or restructured their central office to provide the support and services to all participating schools.
(b) HCS has begun to train its building leaders on the tools and potentiality of the digital learning initiative, and HCS has stated it will provide building leaders the autonomy and flexibility in the areas of scheduling, calendars, personnel, and staffing. However, there is neither a described plan regarding policy change to move in this direction nor a plan with specific examples of when and how and who will develop building leaders to move in this direction.

(c) HCS has stated that students are provided opportunities to progress and earn credit based on mastery; however, there are no specific details on how they do this.

(d) - (e) HCS has stated that students have opportunities to demonstrate mastery of standards, that individual education plans guide learning for special education students, and that special ed and ELL students receive necessary resources, including being taught by qualified teachers. However, beyond these stated practices, there is inadequate information on the policies and rules supporting the personalized learning that emerges from their initiative.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) HCS is very clear in its plan to provide the digital tools in the "hands of each child" and to give each child equal access to all of the curriculum and content within the tools.

(b) HCS presents a plan in providing technical support. They list the activities that already have occurred in training teachers, and they have plans for subsequent training utilizing consultants.

HCS has conducted information meetings with parents, along with free online training tools to help them navigate through the new software.

HCS' plan to extend learning time will give students additional opportunities to interact with the digital tools.

(c) HCS utilizes the I-Now data system which they assure gives parents and students information in an open data format.

(d) According to Pearson's publication in the appendix, it appears that the digital learning program HCS plans to implement uses interoperable data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

HCS describes in detail the various components of its continuous improvement process, relying on multi-level approaches to providing timely and regular feedback for progress.

- Grant coordinators will relay information up and down the organization during regularly scheduled meetings and through their Thirty Day Reports that describe progress toward goal attainment.
- School leadership teams will engage in data reviews and walk-throughs that will be incorporated into a Thirty Day Action Plan shared by school and district personnel.
- HCS will conduct semi-annual building level reviews by outside evaluators who will monitor progress of the improvement plans and identify next steps to move toward student achievement.

- A Progress Report Facilitation Team (unclear if this consists of external or internal reviewers) will develop progress reports that will be reviewed by their outside consultant, Richard DuFour, and shared throughout the district by school and district staff.
- HCS lists multiple, specific action plans to assure that continuous improvement reforms are sustained.
- HCS guarantees transparency of their improvement plans by posting on each school's website the instructional targets and evidence of implementation of its improvement plan.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

HCS describes several layers of ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

- Grant coordinators will be given the responsibility to ensure program and project implementation occurs systemically with ongoing, regularly scheduled meetings and documentation at the school and district level.
- All faculty and administration will engage in professional development activities focused on curriculum development, instructional strategies, digital learning, formative assessments, and data management and analysis.
- Parents and the school community will have ongoing access to their progress through each school's website where information on improvement goals will be updated regularly.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

HCS outlines the percentage of students taught by effective and highly effective teachers and principals, along with their goals to improve that over the next four years.

HCS lists the performance measures for each of the required bands and subgroups, showing appropriate, mandated performance measure, typically centered around math and reading.

There was no mention of the rationale for selecting the measure, how it will provide rigorous and timely information, and how it will be reviewed and measured over time.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

HCS describes plans to monitor and evaluate the implementation of improvement goals through the use of external reviewers and the guidance of Richard DuFour, which includes recommendations for professional development activities. However, there is no description of a high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of RTT - district funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology. Nor is there a high-quality plan to evaluate more productive use of time, staff, money, or other resources to improve results. There are no detailed activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties listed to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTT activities mentioned in this section.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a)-(b) HCS has identified the funds from the RTT grant to support the project, including funds from other sources, such as the HCS' state funds for FY 2013 - FY 2016. The budget appears to be reasonable and sufficient to support the implementation of the grant.

(c)(i)-(ii) HCS provides rationale for their investments and priorities, including a description of the funds, and they list their local funds that will be used for ongoing operational costs during and after the grant period.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

HCS presents a budget extending to FY 2017, supported by HCS' state funds, to cover notebook computers, service charges, digital curriculum, and professional development. They provide a plan for sustainability in which the goal is to establish an innovative cloud technology learning center (AAETC). Their plan, however, lacks specific information to be a high-quality plan. The timelines, deliverables and responsible parties lack specific details.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

(1) HCS does not provide a description of any coherent and sustainable partnerships it has formed with public and private organizations to support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1.

(2) HCS identifies no more than ten population-level desired results for students that align and support the applicant's broader RTT - district proposal. Their educational results focus on all students increasing school performance scores in reading and math, and other education outcomes are included (e.g., a goal in which 80% of students attain an ACT composite score of 22, the 1:1 digital initiative, city of Huntsville has 100% WiFi availability).

(3)(a)-(e) HCS does not describe how a partnership would complete the tasks described in this part of the selection criteria.

(4) HCS does not describe how the partnership would integrate education and other services that may address the social-emotional and behavioral needs of participating students.

(5)(a)-(e) HCS does not describe how a partnership would build the capacity of staff in participating school by providing them with tools and supports for any of the tasks and activities mentioned in this part of the selection criteria.

(6) HCS identifies its annual performance measures for math and reading that appear to be ambitious yet achievable.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Conceptually, Huntsville City Schools describes ways in which it would build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments designed to improve learning and teaching through personalization strategies and tools and other components listed in Absolute Priority 1. Their 1:1 Learning Initiative has great potential. However, they do not present sufficient comprehensive plans to implement it. Their application lacks clear, coherent responses to many of the selection criteria, and they often fail to develop adequate high-quality plans with specific information on activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties. Because of the lack of clarity, precision and coherence in the writing of the application, one cannot be assured the district will implement its goals effectively, efficiently and with fidelity.

Total	210	125

Technical Review Form